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ABSTRACT

Forms used for evaluating teachers from every geographic area to the United States were examined to determine common characteristics. Thirty of 75 forms received from school districts (local educational agencies) were analyzed. A synthesis of evaluation schemes across the country includes certain characteristics: (1) each teacher must have a current copy of the evaluation forms whether the teacher is to be evaluated or not; (2) a goal setting conference between teacher and administrator is part of the evaluation process; (3) classroom observation is included; and (4) a post-observation conference between teacher and administrator is conducted. Many levels of assessment were found, with 41% providing only two. Despite variations of format and timing, there were basic similarities across the country in theory, goals, procedures, and frequency of evaluation. (SLD)

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An Analysis of Teacher Evaluation Forms

by

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For years, schools have been searching for and implementing various proclaimed panacea's for the alleged ills affecting them. Programs, themes, curriculum changes, all bordering on fads, come and go. Each projects optimistically the improvements of education, yet they all overlook the most tangential influence on the system; that is, the teacher. In "Beyond the Commission Reports-the Coming Crisis in Teaching," Linda Darling-Hammond states that elaborate accountability schemes such as management by objectives, competency based education and minimum competency testing result in "teacherproof curriculums" that are the antithesis of professionalism. She consludes that these are merely "bureaucratic controls" and fail in their attempt to upgrade. In 1972, the Ford Foundation research titled "A Foundation Goes to School" further identifies trendy notions whose impetus has waned. Such notions are individualized instruciton, team teaching, multi media emphasis, unique school design and scheduling. All have failed to address the key to the issue which is the teacher.

Dropkin (1973) cites three problems in improving the assessment of education: lack of money, difficulty in assessing teacher behavior and lack of organization of ideas associated with the relationship between teacher behavior and student behavior. What still needs to be accomplished is the establishment of a relaitonship between teacher behavior and learner behavior and the development of assessment tools or methods with high reliability and validity to gage the relationship.

According to the Rand report "Teacher Evaluation: A Study of Effective Practices" (1984), there are two purposes of teacher evaluation: accountability and improvement. It states "for purposes of accountability, teacher evaluation processes must be capable of yielding fairly objective, standardized, and externally defensible information about teacher performance. For improvement objectives, evaluation processes must yield descriptive information that illuminates sources of difficulty as well as viable courses for change." (p.viii)

Now that emphasis has turned to the teacher, local educational agencies are evaluating their evaluation processes. The focal question to be pursued is to what degree do the existing instruments meet the objectives proffered by Hammond, Dropkin, the Ford Foundation, Rand, et al? The Rand publication surveyed thirty-two school districts' evaluation instruments and procedures. They discovered that there were many broad similiarities. Each LEA had gone through a transition. Their previous instruments had been narrative forms and were therefore highly criticized as being subjective, inconsistent and inefficient. They were replaced with a more standardized form in each case. These new instruments had been established by committees of similar composition: teachers, administrators, union representatives, principals and sometimes parents. They also shared similar goals that they identified as the purpose of an evaluation intrument. Those four goals were to provide criteria for personnel decisions, to emphasize staff development, school improvement and accountability. (p. 17)

In order to do my own analysis of evaluation forms I wrote to 200 LEA's requesting a copy of their current evaluation forms. I selected the 200 on the basis of a list from the National Educational Associations Urban Association Directory which lists their 200 largest affiliates for the 1984-85 year. I intentionally chose the largest school districts because I believed they would have the resources available to them to be the most current and innovative in this field. I received what I believe is an excellent response- 76 responses providing me with 75 actual evaluation forms. (One LEA, Boulder Valley CO.-doesn't use forms and didn't state what they did use). The returns were representative of every geographic area throughout the country as one can see from the following list of respondents: Montgomery, Ala; Anchorage, Alaska; Phoenix, Ariz; Alahama, CA; Fresno, CA; Montbello, CA; Freemont, CA; Garden Grove, CA; Sacramento, CA; San Jose, CA; Long Beach, CA; Stockton, CA; Aurora, CO; Cherry Creek, CO; Denver, CO;

Jefferson County-Lakework, CO; Orange County-Orlando, Fla; Volusia-Holly Hill, Fla; Escambia-Pensacola, Fla; Polk-Burtow, Fla; Honolulu, Hawaii(central); Elgin, Il; Rockford, Il; Evansville, In; Fort Wayne, In; Cedar Rapids, Ia; Des Moines, Ia; Jefferson County-Louisville, Ky; Carroll County-West minster, Md; Mont. County-Rockville, Md; Anne Arundel-Annapolis, Md; Washington County-Hagersotwn, Md; Frederick, Md; Howard Co.-Columbia, Md; Prince George's Co.-Forrestville, Md; Baltimore Co.-Towson, Md; Brockton, Ma; West Newton, Ma; Kalamazoo, Mi; Luronia, Mi; Grand Rapids, Mi; Lansing, Mi; Anoka-Hennipen, Minn; Parkway-St. Louis, Mo; Omaha, Ne; Clark Co.-Las Vegas, Nv; Camden, Nj; Edison, Twp-Metuchen, N.J.; Elizabeth, N.J.; Columbus, Ohio; Parma Heights, Ohio; Tulsa, OK; Putnam City, OKC; UTP-OKC; Beaverton, Oregon; Portland, Oregon; Eugene, Oregon; Knoxville, Tennessee; Dallas, TX; El Paso, TX; San Antonio, TX; Austin, TX; Salt Lake City, Utah; Chesterfield-Richmond, VA; Fairfax, VA; VA Beach, VA; Bellevue, Washington; Lake Washington-Kirkland, WA; Spokane, Washington; Edmonds-Lynwood, Washington; Kanawhe-Charleston, W.V.; Green Bay-Wixconson; Madison, Wisconsin; Kenoshe, Wisconsin; Natroma Co.-Casper, WY.

Through a preliminary examination of the seventy-five forms, I too found many similarities. My analysis, however, is limited to an analysis of the forms themselves since I did not have access to the personnelin each LEA who could have provided insight into the actual naunces of implementation.

The examination of these seventy-five forms was a very cumbersome and tedious task for two reasons: the actual number-seventy-five-was a significant number; but compounding this was the first finding in my analysis; that is, that the format, size and placement of evaluation forms are extremely varied. Evaluation forms are placed in either the Negotiated Agreement or in a Personnel Department Policy Statement with the LEA's being split evenly on the two approaches. The size and formats also varied from a small 3x5 booklet to a large 8x11 publication. Over

half of the forms were of various smaller sizes. For both of these reasons I chose to limit to thirty the number of forms I would more closely examine. The remainder of this paper will elaborate on a comparison of the specific characteristics of thirty evaluation forms randomly chosen from the original seventy-five.

My analysis of these thirty forms provides a rich array of individualism as well as broad underpinings of similarity. A synthesis of the schemes for most evaluation procedures would include the following:

1. all teachers must have in hand at the beginning of the year, a copy of the evaluation forms currently in use (regardless of whether or not the teacher will be evaluated that year)
2. a goal setting conference during which the teacher and the administrator jointly establish goals for the upcoming year
3. a classroom observation, usually a minimum of thirty minutes
4. a post-observation conference between the teacher and administrator

This is a composite of the sequence of evaluation procedures from the beginning of the school year until Christmas or mid year-with the possibility of the cycle of observation and post observation repeating itself again before mid year depending upon the agreed number of observations in each particular LEA. After mid year, the observation cycle will occur again concluding with some means of final disposition i.e. a summary evaluative instrument. Often, this summary instrument will include an appraisal process log which lists the dates of observation, names of observors, as well as general recommendation for continued employment or termination.

Also occuring with great frequency are Professional Development Plans for those not meeting acceptable standards during an observation. This plan should be outlined during the post observation conference that followed the unsatisfactory observation. It should include specific indicators within the realm of performance of that teacher. Those indicators should be evaluated again, in the succeeding observation. Thus the LEA is documenting its attempt to remediate.

Three other variations of the evalustive procedure occurred-not frequently, but as noteworthy characteristics of individual plans. Four LEA's included teacher reaction forms as part of their post observation conference. This involved giving the teacher a form to fill in similar in format to the evaluator's (i.e. Narrative and/or Check-off) during the conference and prior to the evaluator revealing his reaction to the observation-thus assuring more valid, unbiased teacher input. These forms asked in essence three questions:

1. Was this a typical example of your classroom teaching?
2. Were there any extenuating circumstances which would make this observation typical?
3. Did you feel ill at ease or under excessive stress due to the presence of an evaluator?

One LEA included in the evaluative procedure a commendation form for superior work and another included as mandatory a form for Professional Growth and Activities upon which the teacher must enumerate the ways in which he plans to continue his professional development. A typical response to the letter would include coursework the teacher might be pursuing.

Visually, one can identify from the various forms that there are many levels of assessment ranging from completely narrative to completely objective and including differing combinations of the two. Those which were almost all objective were composed of two through five levels of assessment. Surprisingly, forty-one percent of those provided only two levels of assessment. Thirty-six percent provided three levels of assessment; and 13.6 percent included five levels. The wording for the levels differed also, with variations of "satisfactory", "needs to improve", and "unsatisfactory" being most typical. The point of contention for this sample is that there are two negative options and only one positive option. Some LEA's chose to word their three levels more positively as in "Exceeds Standards", "Meets Standards", "Does not Meet Standards". This emphasis, reflective in word choice, is worthy of consideration. Indicative of the range of levels of assessment were

those LEA's who simply provided "yes" or "no" in meeting district standards, and at the other extreme those who enumerate 5 levels, typical of which were "outstanding", "very good", "satisfactory", "marginal", and "unsatisfactory."

There were those who had extensive narrative format during various parts of the evaluation process: pre-planning, observation, and final and/or post observation. 36.6% had narrative pre-planning sessions, 46% had narrative observation sessions and 36.6% had narrative post observation/final evaluation sessions. 30% had narrative sections for all three phases.

Those who have narrative pre-planning sessions do so with requirements ranging merely that the session occur within 20 days of the beginning of school and only need occur with those due for evaluation to a list of objectives the evaluator and teacher must address. Five objectives were typical of those plans which identified them, those objectives were:

1. What change or outcome is to be attained? (specifically Id. performance)
2. What action will you, the teacher, take to affect this outcome?
3. What resources will you need?
4. What indicators will you use to assess achievement of this outcome?
5. When should these goals be completed? (timeline)

This type of preplanning has an emphasis on along range perspective of learning providing continuity of goals throughout the year. The antithesis of this is the evaluation form which focuses on one lesson, a sample which was composed of the following areas: "Lesson sequence", "Instructional skills", "Student responses", and "Summary of observation." This latter type of form is best utilized as a part of a "whole" evaluation process and not exclusively as "the" evaluative instrument.

There were various other technical aspects to the evaluative procedure that should occur for both tenured and non-tenured teachers. They were the length of time between the observation and post observation conference and whether or not

observations should be scheduled or unscheduled.

The number of observations mandated varied tremendously. For tenured teachers the least amount was a specified one every four years or a specified progressively declining amount as in Columbus, Ohio where first and second year teachers are evaluated twice a year; third year teachers are given one or two evaluations; fourth and fifth year teacher have one evaluation; sixth through ninth year teachers have no evaluations and therefore teachers are evaluated once every four years. However, the majority of tenured teachers throughout my thirty sample LEA's are evaluated once every three years (58%); others every two years (32%); and the remaining were at the discretion of the LEA. Provisions for non-tenured observation were more uniform. Almost all consisted of two evaluations each year while untenured. Each evaluation usually required two observations for a total of four observations a year; two by mid year and two following.

Those LEA who addressed the issue of whether or not an observation needed to be scheduled usually did so by also specifying the length of notice. Most specifically stated a number of days prior notice (usually two) but many used the phrase "a mutually agreed upon time." Only ten percent addressed the issue negatively, that is, that the teacher need not be notified in advance and one LEA provided that an equal number of non-scheduled observations could occur as those scheduled.

Finally, the issue of within what time period a post-observation conference needed to occur was addressed and is important for two reasons. The schedule of a building administrator is a busy one, as noted by the Rand Commissions recommendation that they (the principal) not be the evaluator. As long as they are, however, a specified time frame needs to be incorporated in the evaluation process. Also, since one of the purposes of these conferences is to outline remediation if warranted, then a time frame is essential. The existence of a time frame for post observation conferences occurred in fifty-six percent of the LEA's evaluation procedures. Among

those fifty-six percent however a range of two days to three weeks occurred. Twenty-eight percent of those addressing this issue required that the conference be held within one week; thirty-five percent required that it be held within two weeks; noting therefore that timelines is important but that time is also needed for adequate conference preparation.

Thus, it is obvious that throughout the country, basic similarities occur in evaluative theory, goals, format, procedure, and frequency. Differences exist to the extent of implementation; those differences will continue to become more disparate as innovations such as those occuring in Tennessee, the Carolina's and Toledo, et, al. set the pace and affect the "core" of the process which is reflected in this paper.

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